

IN THE CLAIMS

Please enter the following claims:

1.-13. (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) A method of supplementing a cleaning and sterilizing process ~~for of an endoscope soiled item~~ having bio-contaminants in a sterilizing apparatus having a water storage tank, comprising the steps of:

a. applying a chemical sterilizing agent to a clean endoscope item to achieve high-level disinfection; ~~and~~

b. ~~providing a final rinse of the high level disinfected item with ozonated, treating~~ filtered water stored in said tank ~~to degrade remaining biomatter resulting from contamination of said water~~, wherein ozone is continuously added to the water in the tank by re-circulation past ~~the~~ a venturi; and

c. providing a final rinse of the high-level disinfected endoscope with said ozonated, filtered water stored in said tank, wherein said water is sterilized by said treating but said endoscope is not exposed to freshly generated ozone by said final rinse.

15.-19. (cancelled)

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said chemical sterilizing agents are selected from the group consisting of glutaraldehyde, peracetic acid, and ethylene oxide.

21.-26. (cancelled)

27. (currently amended) A method of preventing cross-contamination of components within a sterilizing apparatus, comprising:

- a. high-level disinfecting an item placed within said sterilizing apparatus according to a predetermined method; and
- b. flushing said apparatus components, including a chamber, a filter, a tray, and a fill line, with ozonated water stored in a tank after the completion of step a, wherein ozone is continuously added to the water in the tank by re-circulation past a venturi and said water is sterilized by said re-circulation, but said apparatus components are not exposed to freshly generated ozone.

28.-29. (cancelled)